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FRED GALVAN

UNESCO AND ISRAEL

ANNCR:

NEWS ANALYST FRED GALVAN EXAMINES AN ACTION TAKEN BY A UNESCO (UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION) WORKING COMMITTEE IN NAIROBI THURSDAY.

VOICE:

THERE WAS MORE THAN A TOUCH OF THE THEATER OF THE ABSURD IN THE WORKING COMMITTEE'S CONDEMNATION OF ISRAEL FOR ALLEGED VIOLATIONS OF ARAB EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS IN ISRAEL'S OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. A DRAFT RESOLUTION CONTAINING THE CONDEMNATION WAS APPROVED THURSDAY BY A WORKING COMMITTEE BY AN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY -- ONLY THE UNITED STATES AND FIVE OTHER COUNTRIES OPPOSED IT. MOST WEST EUROPEAN AND LATIN AMERICAN NATIONS ABSTAINED.

THE CENSURE CENTERS ON WHAT THE DRAFT RESOLUTION CALLS ISRAEL'S SYSTEMATIC CULTURAL ASSIMILATION IN THE OCCUPIED LANDS.

THE VOTE CAME WELL IN ADVANCE OF THE EXPECTED DEPARTURE OF A UNESCO FACT-FINDING MISSION TO THE OCCUPIED AREAS. ISRAEL JUST THIS WEEK AGREED TO PERMIT THE MISSION TO VISIT THEM. BUT THURSDAY'S ACTION IN NAIROBI -- AS ISRAELI SOURCES HAVE INDICATED -- RAISES THE POSSIBILITY OF AN ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL OF SUCH PERMISSION.

AMERICAN DELEGATE ROBERT KAHN POINTED OUT THAT HIS DELEGATION OPPOSED THE DRAFT RESOLUTION BECAUSE IT CONDEMNS ISRAEL BEFORE THE UNESCO FACT-FINDING GROUP HAS EVEN UNDERTAKEN ITS JOB. THE DRAFT RESOLUTION, THE AMERICAN DELEGATE ADDED, IS CONTRARY TO ELEMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF FAIRNESS AND EQUITY. CERTAINLY THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT THE DOCUMENT PREJUDGES THE FACTS OF THE CASE INVOLVED.

THAT SUCH A PREJUDGMENT OF THE ISSUE OF ISRAEL'S OCCUPIED TERRITORIES WILL HAVE REPERCUSSIONS HERE IN THE UNITED STATES IS CERTAIN. THOSE REPERCUSSIONS COULD WELL FURTHER ERODE THE AMERICAN PUBLIC'S SUPPORT FOR UNESCO. ANOTHER MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN DELEGATION -- CONGRESSMAN ROBERT QUIE OF MINNESOTA -- INDICATED THIS. HE SAID HE BELIEVES THE DRAFT RESOLUTION'S CONDEMNATION OF ISRAEL WILL MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR CONGRESS TO APPROVE FUTURE UNESCO FUNDING, OR RELEASE FUNDS IT FROZE LAST YEAR.

THE CONGRESSIONAL FREEZE CAME IN REACTION TO THE UNESCO 1974 CONFERENCE'S EXCLUSION OF ISRAEL FROM ITS EUROPEAN REGIONAL GROUPING -- IN EFFECT AN ACT OF OSTRACISM BY UNESCO. CONGRESSIONAL ADVOCATES OF THE FREEZE ON U.S. FUNDING ARGUED THAT UNESCO'S ACTION WAS CONTRARY TO UNESCO'S CHARTER. THE CHARTER FORBIDS THE ORGANIZATION FROM INTRUDING ITSELF INTO POLITICAL SITUATIONS BY DISTORTING ITS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL MISSION. IN AN OBVIOUS EFFORT TO REMEDY THE SITUATION, THE UNESCO CONFERENCE SOME DAYS AGO RESCINDED ITS BAN ON ISRAEL'S PARTICIPATION IN ITS REGIONAL BODIES. THIS WAS INITIALLY SEEN AS A CONCILIATORY GESTURE BY THOSE OPPOSING THE BAN -- INCLUDING ISRAEL. IT WAS IN THE WAKE OF THAT CONFERENCE ACTION THAT ISRAEL APPROVED THE FACT-FINDING MISSION UNESCO WAS TO SEND TO THE OCCUPIED AREAS.

BUT THE ACTION BY THE CONFERENCE COMMITTEE SUGGESTS THAT UNESCO HAS FALLEN INTO A TRAP MUCH LIKE THAT MENTIONED IN "ALICE IN WONDERLAND" ... OF RENDERING ITS "SENTENCE FIRST--VERDICT AFTER.

JS/PBN